

intends. *Cape Fear Rising* also restates Waddell's account of the defense of black prisoners at the jail, although Sam is among those who note the hypocrisy of preventing a lynching hours after directing a mob in the senseless murder of dozens of African Americans. As the violence unfolds, MacRae and Taylor assume command of the Wilmington Light Infantry, because the commander refuses to take part in mob violence. Their ability to command the infantry reflects their control over the day's events. Ultimately, MacRae controls the extent of the violence. When Taylor declares that a black man who negotiates the release of white prisoners will face a firing squad for "[i]nciting insurrection," MacRae overrules his co-conspirator, revealing his plan to banish leading blacks and white Fusionists. Gerard concludes that between 120 and 150 African Americans were killed in the riot, offering a much more violent interpretation than any other author. He places MacRae at the center of this bloodshed.

Cape Fear Rising inspired considerable local interest in the events of 1898. The *Wilmington Sunday Star-News* featured a front-page story on the novel, addressing the depictions of MacRae, Rountree, and Walker Taylor. Walker Taylor III and George Rountree III, prominent residents of Wilmington, commented on the novel. Taylor released a statement that the "book was one of many accounts of the riots and that the author had obviously done much research." He deflected attention from 1898 onto current problems in Wilmington and the need for racial harmony. Taylor later stated that the negative portrayal of his grandfather "displeased" him. Rountree had not read the novel, but he suggested that the leading men of Wilmington were products of their times: "There was a peculiar chemistry or dynamic then that I don't fully understand because I wasn't living it."⁵³ These men resisted overturning the traditional narrative first laid out by Democrats in the days after the riot. The opinions of the African American community were notably absent from this article, illustrating the persistence of white control over public memory of the event.

The editorial page of the *Wilmington Morning Star* offered a forum for debate on the book's value. Beejay Grob criticized Gerard's use of the historical figures without the permission or perspectives of the leading families of Wilmington. He suggested that *Cape Fear Rising* might simply offer Gerard's "biased account."⁵⁴ Fred McRee responded to this criticism by noting that no respect had ever been given to the victims of the riot and their descendants. He proposed that the novel could help "expose that festering sore of our collective local past to critical scrutiny, and learn; or *Cape Fear Rising* can, if we allow it to, help us lay to rest our dead – and our dread."⁵⁵ This closing reference suggests that the black community did not need Governor Broughton's reminder of the bloodshed in order to understand white vigilance. Inez Campbell-Eason, a descendant of one of Wilmington's black businessmen, illustrated that the city's cultural landscape had been marked to remember men who orchestrated the coup. She protested that the city had honored the memory of "a bigot and massacrer like (the first) Hugh MacRae with a park."⁵⁶ Although *Cape Fear Rising* did not usher in a new narrative of the riot, its publication did open a dialog in which African Americans participated.

⁵³ Whisnant, "Violent White Revolt," pg. 6A.

⁵⁴ Beejay Grob, "'98 'Riot' Book Biased, Made-Up," *Wilmington Morning Star*, February 19, 1994, pg. 6A.

⁵⁵ Fred McRee, "Cross the Divide," *Wilmington Morning Star*, February 28, 1994, pg. 6A.

⁵⁶ Inez Campbell-Eason, "Honor Victims," *Wilmington Morning Star*, February 22, 1994, pg. 6A.